

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Ban the beads!

Microbeads, that is. Those little colored flecks in cleansing body care products and even toothpaste are actually little plastic beads. These microbeads end up getting washed down the drain, into the sewer and on to our wastewater treatment facilities. These facilities are not designed to remove floating synthetic particles that are generally .5 mm in diameter (the size of a grain of sand). So, guess where they end up? In the rivers, lakes, bays, gulfs and oceans all over the world.

Besides being a source of pollution themselves, toxic chemicals in the environment adhere to the beads. The beads absorb the chemicals and then are feasted upon by marine life. So not only are fish and other mammals and birds dying from ingesting too much plastic, they are also being poisoned by the toxic chemicals within the plastic. In addition, as the food chain goes: little fish eats plastic, big fish eats plastic and little fish full of plastic, big fish with all those toxic chemicals get eaten by you and me.

Microbeads have become such a worldwide problem that in December of 2015, President Obama signed a bipartisan bill prohibiting the sale and distribution of products containing microbeads. This ban will take effect in 2018. Many states have already placed bans on products containing microbeads.

We as consumers can take steps prior to the ban. There are alternatives available if you must use a cleanser. Many products contain biodegradable ingredients such as apricot shells, oatmeal and sea salt. Take a look at the label to make sure the product does not contain polyethylene or polypropylene. This is one way we can stop at least some of the flow of plastic into our environment and help protect the marine life that shares the planet with us.

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